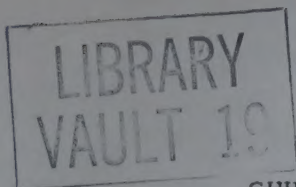
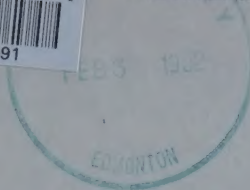


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CHINOOK WINDS


The Alberta climate is heralded by a cloud arch in the Western sky, and within two hours of that portent, there is an abrupt climate change. Temperatures rise from below zero to far above, gas heaters are turned down or out, heavy clothing discarded, and by the time the chinook has gathered its full force, ice and snow have been transformed into gurgling, bubbling streams of water.

The phenomenon derives its name from an Indian word meaning "snow eater". There are three reasons for these westerly winds being warmer than the surrounding masses of air-winds. They originate from the warm Japanese current in the Pacific Ocean.

In mounting the Rockies the moisture precipitates as rain or snow, releasing heat. In the descent east, the air masses warm by compression at the rate of approximately three degrees Fahrenheit for every thousand feet drop in altitude.

The chinook is supposed to be peculiar to southern Alberta, southwest Montana and sometimes a small portion of Saskatchewan. But there are differences of opinion regarding the northerly limits of its occurrence. According to one authority this is located somewhere between Calgary and Red Deer while the easterly limits approximates a line drawn between Saskatoon and Swift Current. According to another, the chinook is as frequent a visitor to Edmonton as at Calgary, but usually remains two or three thousand feet above the city.

But it is not an unmixed blessing. Comforting as the warm dry chinook is to the town dweller and the rancher, the farmer dreads it -- for it blows away his topsoil and results, unless he follows approved corrective measures, in impairment of his crop yields.



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